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SUBJECT: CONSULAR WORKING GROUP DISCUSSES PROGRESS ON LITHUANIA'S  
VISA WAIVER ROADMAP

REFS: A) PATTERSON-FELLOWS E-MAIL DATED 1-30-06, B) 05 VILNIUS 1275

(NOTAL), C) 05 VILNIUS 1242 (NOTAL), D) 05 VILNIUS 1226 (NOTAL), E)  
05 STATE 208035 (NOTAL)

1. The joint GOL-Embassy Consular Working Group (CWG) met at Embassy request on February 8, 2006. Attendees included the Foreign Ministry's Consular Department Director Vaidotas Verba, Deputy Director Petras Anusas, and Consular Attache Marijus Petrusonis, as well as the Consul, both Vice Consuls and the Public Affairs Counselor from the Embassy.

2. The first item on the agenda was a review of the Rice-Chertoff Vision. After the U.S. side explained the initiative and post's efforts to publicize it, MFA interlocutors expressed interest in learning more about the Business Visa Center, digital video visa interviews, and paperless visa applications. Conoffs explained the currently experimental nature of the latter two initiatives.

3. CWG members planned the coming months of Visa Waiver Roadmap public outreach (ref D). Both sides agreed that targeting working-age Lithuanians is crucial, and decided to focus on regional centers with media outlets to maximize exposure, beginning with another "Roadshow" event in one of these cities within the next month.

4. Post used this opportunity to inform the MFA of the Department of Homeland Security request (ref A) that lost and stolen passport data be reported both via Interpol and directly to the USG via post. After learning that the Government of Estonia has recently supplied this information, the MFA agreed to again approach the Ministry of Interior, which has primacy in this issue, about supplying the necessary information to the USG as well as Interpol.

5. Consul also reviewed results to date of our current validation study (ref B), and Vice Consul briefed the group on the results of a post-funded national public opinion poll carried out last November. A number of survey questions provided useful background data on recent Lithuanian travel patterns and desired destinations, as well as the prevalence of illegal work and stays in the United States. The statistically significant poll concluded that Lithuanians continue to view America as a preferred work and tourist destination. (Encouragingly, far more respondents identified EU countries, some of which do not require work visas or permits of Lithuanians, as preferred work destinations.)

6. COMMENT: The meeting was relaxed and collegial. We construe this as evidence of the positive working relationship with the MFA Consular Department and of the realistic, non-politicized view that our interlocutors take towards the Visa Waiver Roadmap. Though they did not raise it at this time, Consular Department officials continue to inquire about training/consultations in the United States for GOL personnel (refs C and E).

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